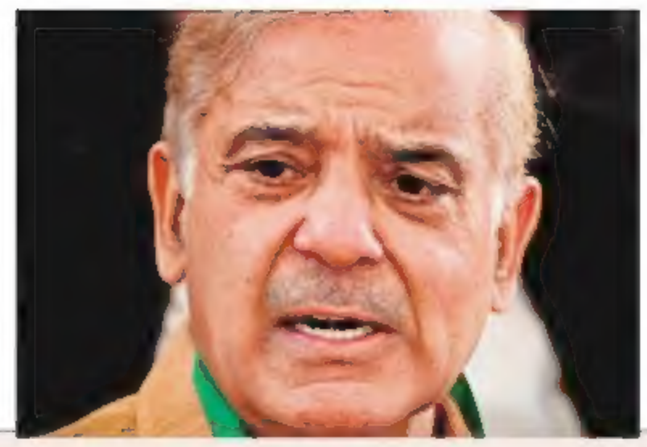
THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

BENGALURU • SATURDAY • FEBRUARY 04, 2023 • ₹9.00 • PAGES 20 • LATE CITY EDITION



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IMF GIVING PAK TOUGH TIME AMID CRISIS: SHEHBAZ SHARIF

The conditions that the Fund wants Pakistan to meet are 'beyond imagination', the Pakistan prime minister said

$7-BILLION ASSISTANCE BEING REVIEWED

Sharif added that Pakistan will fulfil the conditions, but refused to divulge more details. The IMF mission led by Nathan Porter is in Islamabad to hold talks with the Pakistan side headed by finance minister Ishaq Dar for the review of the $7-billion assistance package. Experts say Pak's forex reserves have fallen to $3.09 billion, which would cover just around 3 weeks of imports

FOCUS ON FISCAL CONSOLIDATION

- According to reports in local media, the IMF wants clear action to bridge the daunting fiscal gap between 2 and 2.5 lakh crore rupees
- Pakistan has agreed to increase petroleum prices and allowed a market base exchange rate but that seems too little and too late as the IMF wants more measures to increase revenues

$1.1 bn

OUTSTANDING AMOUNT PAKISTAN IS TO GET FROM IMF'S $7-BN BAILOUT SECURED IN 2019

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PATIENT DEAD

US bars eye drops import from Chennai pharma unit

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @NewDelhi

THE US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has restricted imports of products by Chennai-based Global Pharma after its eye drops were linked to an outbreak of "extensively drug-resistant" bacteria across 12 states in the US, which reportedly infected 55 people and led to the death of one person.

After the FDA asked the company to recall its eye drops sold under the brand names EzriCare or Delsam Pharma, Global Pharma said it has voluntarily recalled them. These eye drops are not sold in India.

Teams from the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) and Tamil Nadu Drugs Control Department are on their way to inspect the plant in Chennai. Officials said it is a contract manufacturing plant supplying through others to the US market. V P Vijayalakshmi, Director in charge of Drugs Control, said details about the unit will be known after the inspection.

This is the third incident of India-made drugs being linked with reported deaths abroad since last October. Earlier, the World Health Organization (WHO) had issued medical alerts twice for India-made drugs linked to alleged deaths of 66 children in The Gambia and 18 children in Uzbekistan.

Soon, SC to have five more judges

SHRUTI KAKKAR @New Delhi

THE strength of the Supreme Court could go up from 27 to 32 within the next few days as the Centre on Friday informed the court that the warrants of appointment of five judges recommended by the collegium could be issued by Sunday.

"It is happening. The five warrants of appointments are being issues. It goes to the President by evening. They will be issued," Attorney General R Venkataramani told a bench led by Justice S K Kaul.

On December 13, the Supreme Court collegium had recommended the elevation of Pankaj Mithal (Rajasthan HC Chief Justice), Sanjay Karol (Patna HC CJ), P V Sanjay Kumar (Manipur HC CJ), Ahsanuddin Amanullah (Patna HC judge) and Manoj Mishra (Allahabad HC judge) as SC judges. P10

Bengaluru has high levels of radioactive radon: IISc

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Bengaluru

INDIAN Institute of Science (IISc) researchers have found hazardous radioactive radon to be present in air and water in the outskirts of Bengaluru, especially where granite mining is on the rise. Radon particles, when ingested, can get trapped in the lungs and over time increase the risk of lung cancer.

According to experts, radon derives naturally from uranium through radioactive transformation, as it undergoes radium decay before it is transformed into a chemically reactive atom.

Radon is found to be 1000 micrograms per litre against the permissible limit of 30-60 grams per litre in parts of Bengaluru as per the initial studies by the researchers. This finding has now made them put the study of radon in water on the top of the priority list.

Presence of radon in air and water leads to damage of lung tissues, threatening cancer of the lungs while presence of uranium affects the urinary tract, leading to kidney cancer.

As radon comes naturally from uranium, the researchers realised uranium content could be high too. They found high content of uranium in groundwater, in the outskirts of Bengaluru, including Chikkaballapur, Kolar, Chintamani and Pavagada.

Researchers said the level of uranium is found to be up to 8000 micrograms per litre in water against the permissible limit of 60 micrograms per litre, in some parts of city outskirts. In Chikkaballapur, Kolar and Chintamani it ranges from 5000-6000 micrgrams per litre. "The measure of radon is being studied as it is a matter of concern" Srinivasan said.

Radon in air is not a major matter of concern if the area is well ventilated. It should not accumulate indoors, said Prof R Srinivasan, from Divecha Centre for Climate Change (DCCC), IISc. He was speaking to the *The New Indian Express* on the sidelines of the first day of the two-day-long training programme for health professionals on 'Health In a Changing Climate: Empowering Health Professionals' at IISc, Bengaluru. P2

Radon in air, water can cause cancer of lungs, kidneys

Presence of radon in air and water leads to damage of lung tissues, threatening cancer of the lungs while presence of uranium affects the urinary tract, leading to kidney cancer.

RBI, govt bid to calm nerves on Adani stock

Dow Jones to drop scrip from sustainability index; Moody's sees impact on fund raising

SACHIN KUMAR @Mumbai

WITH the Adani group saga still unravelling, the regulators and the Centre on Friday came up with clarifications to calm investors' frayed nerves.

While the Reserve Bank of India sought to allay the concerns about lenders' exposure to Adani Group saying the banking sector remains resilient and stable, Union finance minister Nirmala Sithraman reiterated that the exposure of State Bank of India and the Life Insurance Corporation is within limits.

Sitharaman said in a television interview that government-owned financial institutions do not have overexposure in Adani group stocks.

On LIC's exposure, the finance minister said even with valuations falling, the company is still sitting on profits.

SBI chairman Dinesh Khara also chipped in, clarifying that the bank's exposure to Adani group is only 0.88% of its total loans, or ₹27,000 crore, while Bank of Baroda said its exposure is one-fourth of the permissible ceiling.

However, there was no respite for Adani as bad news kept pouring. Credit rating agency Moody's said the recent sell-off in Adani shares could reduce the group's ability to raise capital and that it is assessing overall financial flexibility, including liquidity position of Adani firms.

Taking a harsh stand, S&P Dow Jones Indices said it would remove Adani Enterprises from the widely used sustainability indices on February 7, making the shares less appealing to environment-conscious investors.

In another blow to the Indian conglomerate, S&P Global Ratings revised its outlook for Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone and Adani Electricity from 'stable' to 'negative'.

However, the Gautam Adani-led group found backing from Fitch Ratings, which said there is no immediate impact on the ratings of Adani entities and their securities.

On Friday, shares of Adani Enterprises recovered after hitting a fresh 52-week low of ₹1,017.45 on the NSE.

Meanwhile, amid Opposition parties' clamour for a Joint Parliamentary Committee probe, Union minister Pralhad Joshi said on Friday that the government has nothing to do with the Adani issue.

India has a stable government and a well-regulated financial market. Our regulators are very stringent about governance practices. One instance is not indicative of how well markets are governed

Nirmala Sitharaman

General audit by 'big four'

In a bid to intill confidence among investors, Adani group said it will appoint one of the 'big four' global accounting firms to conduct a general audit of its business. Meanwhile, Fitch Ratings, which said there is no immediate impact on the ratings of Adani entities and their securities

UPPING PASS %

Reduce SSLC pass marks from 28 to 20: Panel to govt

ASHWINI M SRIPAD @Bengaluru

WITH an aim to increase the pass percentage in SSLC examination, the Karnataka Administrative Reform Commission - II has recommended to the state government to reduce passing marks in theory exams from the present 28 marks to 20 marks out of the total 80 marks.

The panel, headed by former chief secretary TM Vijay Bhaskar, submitted its fourth and fifth reports to CM Basavaraj Bommai on Friday. According to the Commission, the Gross Enrolment Ratio of children getting admitted to Pre-University (PU) classes is lowest among all south Indian states. One of the main reasons for this is students failing in SSLC exams. "When other children from other states can do better, why not our children," Vijay Bhaskar told TNIE, who submitted 1,609 recommendations to the CM. The report pointed out that a large number of students belonging to the SC/ST fail in SSLC exams which add to the overall low pass percentage. P4

50% discount: On Day 1, traffic dept gets richer by ₹5 cr

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Bengaluru

A DAY after the Transport Department decided to offer a 50 per cent discount to those who voluntarily pay penalties for traffic violations, as many as 2,01,828 violations were cleared and Rs 5,61,45,000 collected till 9 pm on Friday. The servers of the traffic police department crashed due to the heavy rush. Servers of Paytm and BangaloreOne had also started to slow down.

A large number of people thronged the Traffic Management Centre on Infantry Road and various traffic police stations to avail the discount. The traffic police said they have about 2.3 crores of traffic challan cases pending. Special Commissioner, Traffic, M A Saleem on Friday told TNIE: "Notices were pending since the last 5-6 years with people and they were not responding. The decision of offering a one-time discount was an initiative of the Transport Department and Karnataka State Legal Services Authority." Saleem said that last year Rs 180 crore was collected as penalties. Saleem added that 61,000 violations were cleared at police stations by people. Most of the penalties are for signal jumping, riding without helmet, driving in one-way and wrong parking.

The city traffic police have released the fare chart of the discounted fine amount for 44 different types of traffic violations following the Transport Department's notification. Motorists can pay the fine either by visiting their nearest traffic police stations, at Transport Traffic Management Centres, Karnataka One website (https://www.karnatakaone.gov.in/), Paytm or even by logging on to the BTP website (https://btp.gov.in/) P3

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LOCAL LANGUAGES

IN HCs DISALLOWED BY SC FULL COURT, SAYS RIJIJU

Union law minister Kiren Rijiju on Friday told the Lok Sabha that the full court of the Supreme Court has refused proposals by various states to permit use of their local languages in their respective high courts. The proposals were made by Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal and Karnataka | P9

Traffic claims Nimhans-bound toddler's life

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Bengaluru

IN a tragic turn of events, a one-and-a-half year old girl who was being rushed to Nimhans, died mid-way as the ambulance in which she was being taken got stuck in a traffic jam in Nelamangala. The girl had sustained head injuries in a road accident in Tiptur and was being rushed to Nimhans.

The driver of the ambulance, Madhusudan, was grief-stricken over how a 20-minute delay due to heavy traffic on the busy Bengaluru-Tumakuru Main Road claimed the life of the little girl on Thursday around 9.30 pm.

The girl, Huda Kausar, was a native of Tiptur in Tumakuru district. The accident happened when she along with her parents Ahmed and Ruksana, fell from the bike on which they were travelling after it was hit by an SUV at Kaimara in Tiptur.

Kausar, who was sitting in the front, sustained serious head injuries. Passersby shifted all three to a hospital in Tiptur and from there to Hassan Institute of Medical Sciences. Doctors at the Hassan hospital advised them to take the girl to Nimhans as Kausar's condition was extremely critical.

The ambulance reached Nelamangala from Hassan in an hour but got stuck in traffic near Goraguntepalya for nearly 20 minutes.

"The kid's condition worsened after the ambulance got stuck in traffic. The girl could not get treatment in the golden hour. Although she was being taken to Nimhans, she had to be rushed to a private hospital next to Yeshwanthpura Metro Station in Goraguntepalya as her condition worsened. Unfortunately, she succumbed to her injuries," Madhusudhan told the media. Members of All Karnataka Ambulance Road Safety Group said they were unable to clear the road for traffic inside the city as there were no alternative routes to divert traffic.

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Madhusudan, Ambulance driver